



# Seek The Old Paths

*“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”*  
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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## LORD, THAT OUR EYES MAY BE OPENED

*James W. Boyd*

***The worst blindness of all is spiritual blindness. The blindest of all are those who do not want to see and refuse to see. Sometimes people study and listen, not because they want to know the truth, but because they want to defend what they have already decided to believe.***

**O**ur subject comes from one of the many miracles of our Lord, the words of the blind men. But in addition to the miracle, we have an excellent example set before us by the blind men when they make their request for assistance from Christ.

In Matthew 20:29-34 we read: *“And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, **that our eyes may be opened.** So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him”*

### WHY MIRACLES?

We need to understand why Christ performed miracles. It was in order to convince people He was the Christ. *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that*

*Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name”* (John 20:30-31).

Miracles were performed for the purpose of confirming, proving, verifying the word that was preached. *“And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and **confirming the word with signs** following”* (Mark 16:20). *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was **confirmed unto us** by them that heard him; **God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will”** (Heb. 2:3-4).*

These are the reasons miracles were performed. We now have the inspired written record of these things to show us that Jesus is the Christ. There no longer exists the need for miracles. Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). The word tells us of the verified miracles. The word, once confirmed, does not need any further evidence. In addition, Paul told the Corinthians that these miraculous gifts would cease (1 Cor. 13). To expect miracles to prove anything today is to cast reflection on the all-sufficiency and confirmation of the inspired written word of God.

Let us turn our attention, however, to five things about these blind men and the event of their receiving sight and learn lessons from it that can be helpful to us if we would imitate them (in principle).

### RECOGNITION OF NEED

First, these blind men recognized their need and the power of Christ to provide what they needed. Second, they earnestly desired to “see,” even in the face of rebuke and opposition. Third, they kept pleading until Jesus healed them. They did not quit. Fourth, Jesus opened their eyes because He had compassion on them. Fifth, they followed Him after their eyes were opened.

While their blindness was physical, the worst blindness of all is spiritual blindness. What they did to receive their physical sight, we can do to receive spiritual sight. As Paul told the Ephesians, *“having the eyes of your heart enlightened”* (Eph. 1:18).

### RESPECT CHRIST’S POWER

We must recognize our need of spiritual sight and respect the power of Christ to provide spiritual healing. We, like the blind men, must accept

*(Continued on page 4)*  
**Opened Eyes...**



Editorial...

## THE GRACE OF GOD

Garland M. Robinson

**Everyone can enjoy God's grace  
if they will believe/trust God  
and obey his Word.  
Without obedience,  
no one will receive God's grace.**

The Greek word translated “grace” is *charis*. It is defined as: “*good will, loving kindness, favor, benefit, bounty, recompense, reward*” (Thayer). “*Benefit, favor, gift, liberality, pleasure, joy, thank*” (Strongs). It is translated by several English words in the New Testament: *benefit* (2 Cor. 1:15), *favor* (Luke 1:30), *gift* (2 Cor. 8:4), *grace* (Eph. 2:8), *gracious* (Luke 4:22), *joy* (Philemon 1:7), *liberality* (1 Cor. 16:3), *pleasure* (Acts 24:27), *thank* (Luke 6:32-34), *thanked* (Rom. 6:17), *thanks* (2 Cor. 9:15), *thankworthy* (1 Peter 2:19).

The word *charis* simply has to do with favor, benefit or loving kindness that is shown by one toward another: whether it be God to man or man to man. The word itself does not indicate whether the grace (benefit, favor) is deserved or not deserved, earned or not earned, merited or not merited. These concepts must be determined by the context in which *charis* is used. I point this out because almost without exception when people are asked what “grace” means, the response is: “the unmerited, unearned, favor of God.” But that definition is not found in the word itself.

Notice how the word grace is used in the Scriptures. The church at Corinth took up collections and bestowed *grace* (favor, bounty, good will) upon the needy (2 Cor. 8:6,7,19; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). This action is called their *liberality* -- their grace, favor, toward others (1 Cor. 16:3).

When we speak wholesome words, it *graces* (benefits, favors) the hearers (Eph. 4:29).

We are to sing with *grace* (loving-

kindness, pleasure, joy, good will) in our hearts (Col. 3:16).

Our speech is to always be with *grace* (benefit, favor, bounty) (Col. 4:6).

It is a good thing that our hearts be established with *grace* (loving kindness, favor) and not be carried about with many strange false doctrines that would prohibit such bounty (Heb. 13:9).

There are examples of God bestowing grace upon individuals that is not connected with salvation. When the angel Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus to Mary, he said, “*Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour [grace] with God*” (Luke 1:30). As Jesus grew as a child we learn that he “...*increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour [grace] with God and man*” (Luke 2:52). The word *favor* in these two verses is the Greek word *charis*.

The word “grace” does not always indicate that which is good and honorable. It is used sometimes in a bad sense such as when one does a favor for another hoping to gain something in return. In Acts 24:27 and 25:9, we find that both Felix and Festus were “*willing to shew the Jews a pleasure [grace, benefit]*, but they did so intending to benefit from it themselves, not because of any goodness in their heart.

### WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT GRACE

The New Testament is filled with references to the “grace of God.” We find:

“**The word of his grace**” — Acts 14:3; 20:32. As Paul and Barnabas

preached the word of the Lord, they did so with great boldness. The Gospel message was confirmed by miracles, referred to as “*signs, wonders, various miracles*.” God’s grace/favor was extended to sinful man through the means of teaching men what to do to receive forgiveness of sins and how to live as a Christian (Titus 2:11-12). The word of grace “*is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified*” (Acts 20:32). This is only achieved by learning God’s WORD (John 6:44-45).

“**The gospel of the grace of God**” — Acts 20:24. Paul had a job to do. In the face of grave danger to his life, he said “*neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God*.” His job was to attest to, affirm, cause to be believed, give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Notice, the emphasis is on the Gospel, the means by which God has chosen to save sinful man. The preaching of the Gospel is God’s power to save (1 Cor. 1:18,21; James 1:18,21).

“**The riches of his grace**” — Ephesians 1:7; 2:7. Man has redemption through Christ’s blood, “*the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*.” Paul writes of the “*exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*.” It’s only because of the riches of God’s grace that Christ died for us on the cross. But Christ’s death is of no value to man unless he is taught it, believes it, and responds to it in faithful obedience. “*Ye see then how that by works [obedience to God] a man is justified, and not by faith only*” (James 2:24). So, God’s love prompted Him to do man a favor, extend to him the benefit (called grace) of salvation.

“**The throne of grace**” — Hebrews 4:16. “*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*.” God reigns supreme upon his throne in heaven. It is the source of His loving kindness, mercy, grace, forgiveness. It is from heaven that he extends to man a great benefit/favor (grace) — salvation from sin. But, man has to accept the offer and obey God. Sadly, most do not accept it and obey it.

“**By the grace of God**” Jesus died for every man — Hebrews 2:9.

Because of God’s great love, mercy and grace, Jesus willingly went to the cross to provide the means whereby man could be saved.

**“Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”** — John 1:17. Moses was the great lawgiver to the Israelites (Deut. 5:1-3). Jesus is the great lawgiver to the whole world. Moses himself said of the Christ, *“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; ... And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him”* (Deut. 18:15, 19; cf. Acts 3:22-23). Grace was extended in the Old Testament, such as Noah (Gen. 6:8) and Israel (Acts 7:46). All faithful Christians (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 3:24) enjoy God’s bountiful grace.

But because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, grace is extended to all mankind (Titus 2:11). But, it’s no good unless man learns it, believes it, and obeys it.

**THERE ARE MANY OTHER USES OF THE WORD GRACE**

One can find it (Heb. 4:16), see it (Acts 11:23), receive it (Rom. 1:5), stand in it (Rom. 5:2; 1 Peter 5:12), continue in it (Acts 13:43), grow in it (2 Peter 3:18), believe because of it (Acts 18:27), and have consolation and good hope because of it (2 Thess. 2:16). We also have faith, love, and the hope of heaven because of God’s grace (Col. 1:4-6). Grace makes us spiritually fruitful in every good work because of the knowledge of the truth God’s grace provides (2 Cor. 9:8; Col. 1:10).

Grace can: abound (Rom. 5:20; 6:1; 2 Cor. 9:8), reign (Rom. 5:21), be given (Rom. 12:3,6; 15:5; 1 Cor 1:4; 3:10; Eph. 4:7; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5), be perceived (Gal. 2:9), be with us (Rom. 16:20,24; 2 Cor. 13:14), be bestowed (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 8:1), and be multiplied through the knowledge of God (2 Peter 1:2).

One can be: called into it (Gal. 1:6), called by it (Gal. 1:15), recommended to it (Acts 14:26), saved by it (Eph. 2:5,8), saved through it (Acts 15:11), justified by it (Rom. 3:24; Titus 3:7), and strong in it (2 Tim. 2:1).

Men can also: frustrate it (Gal. 2:21), show insult to it (Heb. 10:29), receive it in vain (2 Cor. 6:1), fail in it

(Heb. 12:15), and fall from it (Gal. 5:4).

Grace has been made available to all men and thereby the offer of salvation (Titus 2:11). It teaches us how to live faithfully according to God’s word (Titus 2:12). We have access to grace by faith (Rom. 5:2). We learn that grace is sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9), and that grace will be brought when Christ comes again (1 Peter 1:13).

Everyone can enjoy God’s grace if they will believe/trust God and obey his Word. Without obedience, no one will receive God’s grace. Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23: *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* This passage reveals that many thought they were right with God, they thought they were obeying God, but found out on judgment day they were not (vs.22-23). They had a clear conscience and felt they were saved. But that was their problem, they believed what man told them to believe and never searched the Scriptures for themselves. They were following man, not God. Every individual is to do their own study, learn God’s will, and obey God’s will. Don’t put your trust in man, but instead, *“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good”* (1 Thess. 5:21). This point is made very clear in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 where we read of *“...false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”* Don’t fall prey to those who may “mean well” but end up leading you down the wrong path. Your soul is at stake. Be like the Bereans who *“searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so”* (Acts 17:11). Love the truth enough to obey it no matter what. *“...Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall”*

(2 Peter 1:10).

Will you **Believe** the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30)? Will you **Repent** of your sins, without which you will never be forgiven (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30)? Will you **Confess** faith in Jesus as God’s only begotten Son and that he is the savior of the world (Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10)? If you believe, repent and confess, you can be **Baptized** in water in order to receive the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

Why not now?

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## Opened Eyes...

(Continued from page 1)

the fact that we stand in need of spiritual healing. No person will come to Christ until he realizes the need to do so. Once we are aware of that need, then we simply have to determine to whom we should appeal. In John 6:68, Peter once asked the question, *“To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”* Christ is the author of salvation (Heb. 5:9), and the only way to God (John 14:6). *“Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12).

All power (authority) belongs to Christ (Matt. 28:18). We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ (Heb. 10:10). There once was a time when men offered animal sacrifices, but they were incapable of removing sins (Heb. 10:4). Such sacrifices had to be offered year by year repeatedly. If they could have been sufficient for the removal of sins, they would not have been offered continually. But Christ was offered only once (Heb. 9:28). Just as He was able to give the blind men their sight, He and He alone could come to this earth and provide for the forgiveness of sins. We must accept that fact.

### AN EARNEST DESIRE

As the blind men faced some opposition in their quest for sight, we may well face opposition in our search for salvation. The blindest of all are those who do not want to see. *“And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them”* (Matt. 13:14-15).

People with a closed mind do not really want to know the truth. They are so content and satisfied as they are, they will not give a moment to questioning what they say they believe. How can any person be brought from error to truth when they care no more for truth than that?

We are exhorted to have a desire for the word of God. *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* (1 Peter 2:2). The Ethiopian had a desire to know the truth and that is why he invited Philip to teach him. The Jews on Pentecost wanted to know what they must do. The Philippian jailer obviously sought the truth when he asked, *“What must I do to be saved?”* Jesus taught, *“Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled”* (Matt. 5:6). Again He said, *“Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you”* (Matt. 7:7).

Sometimes people study and listen, not because they want to know the truth, but because they want to defend what they have already decided to believe. They study hoping to find somebody at fault. They want to prove their own opinions to be right. They may just want knowledge for the sake of having knowledge. The way of Christ is not designed to be forced upon people. There must be a desire to learn the truth and obey the truth.

### OVERCOMING OPPOSITION

Many people have had to overcome various kinds of rebuke and opposition as they sought the favors of the Lord. There are always those who would discourage a person from crying unto God. It can come from families, friends, associates. It may stem from our own prejudices and indifferences. Would it not have been a tragedy if the blind men had given heed to the discouraging words of those who advised them to be quiet and discontinue their efforts to be healed by Jesus?

### THEY STAYED WITH IT

Just as the blind men kept pleading, we cannot be content until we “know that we know.” And, we can know. This is the reason God has given us His word, that we might know the truth and be free from that which enslaves us. Only if we continue in the “word” will we know the truth and the truth will make us free (John 8:31-32). First Chronicles 16:11 reads, *“Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually.”* We once heard of a person who had been a member of four different denominations. As he studied and learned, he abandoned them one by one — knowing that

they were not what the New Testament presented as the church. Eventually, he learned, believed and obeyed the truth. He would not quit in his search for what the Bible teaches. Neither should we.

None of us will ever fully understand the depths of the knowledge of God. It is beyond our capacity. But those things we must “know and do” to be saved are within our reach. We cannot content ourselves and quit searching. Once we have found the truth, we should obey it and hold to it.

If the blind men had ceased their cries, they would have continued in darkness. If we cease trying to find the truth, and having found it, do not obey it, then we will live our life in spiritual darkness and be lost forever.

### THEY COULD SEE

We take note that Jesus, out of compassion, healed because of the pleading of men. Did He do this because they were deserving? Did He owe it to them? Was He paying a debt back to them? No, on all counts. Out of compassion He healed them. Friend, it is because Jesus Christ had compassion on sinful man that He came to this earth and fulfilled His mission of dying on the cross that we might be saved. He understands the trials and temptations of man. He is sympathetic. Yet, He demands that we obey His will. He has lovingly, graciously, mercifully provided for mankind. He reaches toward our hearts with the Gospel of Christ. By His word, He leads us toward obedience and salvation. He came to seek and to save (Luke 19:10), not primarily to destroy and punish. Men were already on the path of destruction because of their sins. If we will not shut Him out, if we will direct our appeals toward Him according to His will, He will save us just as He healed the blind men.

### THEY FOLLOWED CHRIST

After sight was given these men, they followed Christ. When we are washed clean by His blood in baptism (Eph. 1:7; Acts 22:16), we are to follow Him also throughout life (1 Cor. 15:58). The way we show our gratitude toward God and Christ for that which has been done on our behalf is to give our lives as living sacrifices to the service

of God through Christ (Rom. 12:1-2). This is done by following Him in life. To follow the footsteps of Jesus, we will be led into eternal glory (2 Tim. 2:10).

May our prayer be, “Lord, may our eyes be opened. May we be willing to cry unto thee, recognizing our need and thee as the only provider of salvation. May we continue to seek thee,

and follow thee all the days of our lives, that we may live with thee forever and ever in heaven.”

*aburningfire.net*  
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# WATER: OF ALL THE THINGS TO STUMBLE OVER

*Alan Adams*

**N**icodemus wanted to know if “born again” (John 3:3) had reference to a physical birth. Jesus said, No. It is certain that no one can be “born again” in the physical sense. Jesus explained that He had in mind a rebirth of “the spirit,” a “renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). The Holy Spirit, causes our spirit to be “begotten again” through the “incorruptible seed, the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). God’s Word enters the ears, then the heart of man, and brings about faith, repentance, and a desire to be right with God. This is being “*born of the spirit*” (John 3:6,8). But now, what about that water? There are some pretty exotic views about this little word.

When Jesus first said the thing about being born again (anew), Nicodemus was puzzled, so the Lord explained that being born anew means to be “*born of water and of the spirit*” (John 3:5). There is nothing to indicate that Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus meant by the words water and spirit. It is granted that sometimes words are used figuratively; just as here where Jesus is using the normal word, born, to talk about something other than what that word usually means. But, and this is a really important rule to follow when interpreting the meaning of words, Jesus made clear from the context that he was using the word born in a figurative sense; because, when Nicodemus asked him about a man entering his mother’s womb the second time, the Lord explained that he was not talking about being physically born, he was talking about spiritually born.

Yet, when Jesus said that the new birth was “*of water and of the spirit*,” He left no indication whatsoever that the words water and spirit mean anything other than what they normally mean. Were it not for some people being so dead-set against the idea of water baptism being connected to one’s being saved, it is doubtful that anyone would ever have read John 3:5, and come away understanding any thing other than Jesus saying, in order for a person to enter the kingdom of God, he must undergo a change of spirit and he must be baptized in water.

Did you know that just twenty-two verses before Jesus talks of being born of water (John 3:5), he uses the exact same word? In John 2:7, it says that Jesus told some people to “*fill the waterpots with water*.” And, did you know that just 18 verses after John 3:5,

it says that John “*was baptizing in Enon near to Salim, because there was much water there*” (John 3:23)? It is not reasonable to doubt that water in John 2:7 and John 3:23 means anything other than H<sub>2</sub>O. Why would anyone imagine that it means something other than that in John 3:5?

Some say that water in John 3:5 really symbolizes the Holy Spirit, because they want to argue that Jesus is saying a person must be baptized in the Holy Spirit to enter the kingdom of God. If that were true, then you would have Jesus saying, a person must be born of the spirit and of the spirit to enter the kingdom of God; which, of course, would be absurd. Jesus uses two distinct words side-by-side: water and spirit. Neither symbolizes the other. There is no reason to imagine they do. Some say that the water here symbolizes the word; again, in the absence of compelling reason. Does Paul not speak of the church being cleansed “*with the washing of water by the word*” (Eph. 5:26)? Both the word and water have their place. One does not symbolize the other.

The most exotic explanation of the water in John 3:5 is that it refers to the amniotic fluid in which a prenatal baby lives for nine months of its life. Now, did Jesus mean to say, “except a baby be born after his mamma’s water breaks, and then years later as a man he be born of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven?” Surely not. In fact, to answer Nicodemus’ query about being in his mother’s womb again, Jesus explained that he was talking about an entirely different birth, that of being born of water and of the spirit. There is really no way around the fact that somehow, somehow, pure, plain old water has some connection with one’s entering the kingdom of God. And, if that water is not water baptism that is mentioned no less than seventy-five times in the New Testament, then it can have no meaning at all.

When the Bible says, except, that pretty well settles it. Those, and only those, who are born of water and of the spirit will enter into the kingdom of God; which is to say, only penitent baptized believers are in the kingdom of God.

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# THE POWER OF CHOICE

Marvin L. Weir

*Don't let the devil deceive you into thinking  
you do not have the power of choice!*

*May we have the courage to choose to live godly lives!*

One cannot read 2 Kings 21 and 22 without being impressed with “free moral agency” and the “power of choice.” It is a cop-out and excuse to cry, “The devil made me do it,” “My friends made me do it,” or “I just could not help it.”

Provided one is of sound mind, he has the power to choose to do either right or wrong. One’s environment may be an obstacle to overcome, but it is not an impossible task. Neither can society or the majority be blamed for one’s course of action. The “everybody else is doing it” excuse may sound comforting to the one who has chosen sin over godliness; but *“the wages of sin is death”* (Rom. 6:23), and one is *“not to follow a multitude to do evil”* (Exodus 23:2).

Hezekiah *“walked before [God] in truth and with a perfect heart”* (2 Kings 20:3). His son, Manasseh, chose to *“do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah”* (2 Kings 21:2). But Manasseh’s grandson, Josiah, proved to be one of the most godly of Old Testament kings. The Scriptures say of Josiah, *“And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left”* (2 Kings 22:2). The destiny of one’s soul is determined by the choices **he** makes while living in this world.

Let us learn from some choices Josiah made!

## **Josiah chose a good example!**

The Bible says, *“while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father”* (2 Chron. 34:3). Josiah chose not to sacrifice *“unto all the graven images”* (2 Kings 22) as did his father, Amon. Neither did he seek to follow his grandfather, Manasseh, or even Hezekiah. Josiah knew they were not perfect role models so he desired to imitate the true and living God. Josiah desired a God like unto the God of David, and the young king desired to rule his kingdom as

David had done — according to Jehovah’s will.

People today can learn from Josiah. One must not be a follower of any man — grandfather, father, or friend. To gain Heaven one must follow Christ who left us an example that we *“should follow his steps”* (2 Peter 2:21). Christ always chose to do the Father’s will (John 6:38), and we can choose to do likewise if we so desire.

**Josiah chose to revere the Word of God!** Hilkiah, the priest, found the book of the law written by Moses while the temple was undergoing repair. Upon hearing the reading of *“the words of the book of the law, [Josiah] rent his clothes”* (2 Kings 22:11). Josiah believed God’s Word and in a most humble way accepted the Word as truth. One who will not humble himself before God’s Word cannot be benefitted by the Word.

Another comforting thought is that even though the Word of God is burned or buried, it will never be destroyed. The Lord promised, *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”* (Matt. 24:35). The Holy Scriptures will continue to manifest guidance, authority, and power as long as this earth stands.

**Josiah sought to know the mind of God for himself!** The king’s instructions give great insight regarding his desire to **do** what was godly and right. Josiah said, *“Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us”* (2 Kings 22:13). As king of Judah, he wanted both he and his people to comply with God’s will. Josiah learned and accepted a most valuable lesson — God’s wrath will always be kindled against those who refuse to obey a *“thus saith the Lord.”*

Josiah’s attitude was different from the attitude of worldly people and even many who profess to be Christians. It was the charge of Christ that the scribes and Pharisees (the religious people) searched the Scriptures but would not come to Him for life. The Lord rebuked these religious leaders saying, *“Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me”* (John 5:39). People today should learn that it does absolutely no good to say, *“Lord, Lord, and do not the things”* the Lord says to do (Luke 6:46). Christ is the author of eternal salvation, but **only** to those who obey Him (Heb. 5:9)!

**Josiah unashamedly heralded forth the Word of God** (2 Kings 23:1-2)! He was not embarrassed or ashamed of his faith and trust in God’s Word. Believing God’s Word not only saved Josiah, but also Judah (for a period of time). People need to hear the Word of God even if they say they have no interest in it. Ezra read from God’s Book *“...from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law”* (Neh. 8:3). People may choose not to heed God’s law, but they need to be given the opportunity to hear His will for their lives.

So many today are ashamed of or do not believe the Word of God, and, such an attitude, has also affected members of the Lord’s church. A Christian would do well to remember these words: *“Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels”* (Mark 8:38). May Christians choose to heartily wield the sword of the Spirit and sound forth God’s will for mankind!

**Josiah consecrated himself to**

**do God's will** (2 Kings 23:3)! The king promised to follow God and keep His commandments. It is one thing to *believe* what the Bible says. It is another thing to be willing to *do* what the Bible says to do! The Bible is clear. If one's faith will not lead to action, it is a dead faith (James 2:14-26). Josiah surrendered to the Word of God, and it was evident for people

to see that surrender.

Will you and I profit from Josiah's decisions regarding the power of choice? The Bible makes it clear that we must "*be doers of the word, and not hearers only*" (James 1:22), or we deceive ourselves. The Lord Himself warned, "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of*

*my Father who is in heaven*" (Matt. 7:21).

Don't let the devil deceive you into thinking you do not have the power of choice! May we have the courage to choose to live godly lives!

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## A CROWN LAID UP FOR ME

Gary Colley

**P**lease allow this article to remind you of the joyous words of Paul in 2 Timothy 4:7-8 when he speaks of his death being near. He said there was something "laid up" for him called a "crown." He called this reserved item a "crown of righteousness."

### INTERESTED IN THE LOST

Paul later wrote to the Roman brethren that he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, and that therein was revealed "*the righteousness of God* (or God's plan of salvation of faith, repentance, confession of Jesus as God's Son, and baptism in water for the remission of sins for a person to become righteous. GC) *from faith unto faith: as it is written. But the righteous shall live by faith*" (Rom. 1:16-17).

In Romans 10:1-3, Paul shows that the Jews were lost; but that they were not lost or doomed beyond remedy. Rather, he teaches them as he did the Corinthians, that they might be saved by obedient belief in the good news of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-3)! At the present time, he said they were ignorant of God's righteousness — His plan by which they could have salvation.

### PAUL'S TWO LIVES

The first half of Paul's life had been lived under the Law of Moses, but in defiance and rebellion against Jesus and His established church (Acts 8:1-2). He believed in God, but not in Jesus (John 14:1). But a great change came in the latter half of his life as he lived in obedience to his new King, Jesus. Therefore, his life now was a life of obedience, lived in

keeping the New Testament commandments, which constitutes "righteousness" (Psa. 119:172). Along this line, Jesus also asked, "*Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I command you*" (Luke 6:46)?

Jesus' promise in the great commission is that He will be with those who observe His will, "*always, even to the end of the world*" (Matt. 28:18-20). The apostle John, "the apostle of love", wrote, "*Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning*" (1 John 3:7-8).

### THE REWARD

Paul makes it evident, that righteousness as a crown, would be his eternal reward for fighting a good fight as he upheld the Gospel (1 Tim. 6:12), finishing the race of living in faithfulness, and keeping the faith to the end of life (2 Tim. 4:7-8). This, he did in spite of all the opposition and the devil's afflictions sent his way in life. For Jesus' purpose to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), "*the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*" (1 John 3:7-8). Peter exhorts, "*Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8).

### RIGHTEOUSNESS AS A CROWN

The Christian life is a life of obedient faith in which we walk or live. And, for holding fast or keeping the faith of the Gospel in his life, Paul had this blessed assurance of 1 John

2:25 — eternal life. The crown is "laid up" or reserved with his name on it, until he goes to receive it. The beautiful part about this is that he says all today can have the same! This is much like what is promised to the faithful Christian in the last book of the Bible when Jesus speaks of those who "*die in the Lord*" (Rev. 14:13).

Note closely Paul's closing words: "*For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

### CROWNS

Several crowns are mentioned in the Bible. The first crown in the Bible was a crown of beauty. It is mentioned as a crown of gold "upon the head of Joseph" in Egypt (Gen. 49:26). The most horrible crown ever worn or mentioned in God's record, was the crown of thorns worn by Jesus, the only begotten Son of the living God (Matt. 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2,5). He died that all who will obey Him can avoid wearing a crown of eternal punishment in Hell (Heb. 5:8-9)!

### WHICH CROWN WILL WE CHOOSE FOR OURSELVES?

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## SEEK THE OLD PATHS

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## DON'T BE LEFT OUT

There are many denominations in the world today and not one of them is mentioned in the Bible. None of them existed in the first century — the time the New Testament was written. Consider some of the following dates when some of the modern-day denominations were established:

- The Catholic Church — ca. A.D. 600.
- The Lutheran Church — A.D. 1517.
- The Baptist Church — A.D. 1522.
- The Episcopal Church — A.D. 1534.
- The Presbyterian Church — A.D. 1536.
- The Methodist Church — A.D. 1729.
- The Mormon Church — A.D. 1830.
- The Nazarene Church — A.D. 1907.

The word “church” is used very loosely here, since there is only one church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23). The point is clearly made in the Bible that in New Testament times there was only one church.

The church was purchased with the precious blood of Christ which he shed on the cross. In Acts 20:28, Paul mentions to the elders of the church at Ephesus, the church which Christ “*hath purchased with his own blood.*”

In the Old Testament, we find prophecy of the establishment of the Lord’s church (Isa. 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2; Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14). These prophecies were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). That is the day the Lord’s church was established. “*And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved*” (Acts 2:47).

One who is a member of some other religious organization is outside of the Lord’s body, the body of baptized believers, the saved (Eph. 1:22-23; Mark 16:16). When God sent the flood, only saved were in the ark (Gen. 7:1,7,13; 1 Peter 3:20). The entrance to the ark was sealed shut to those outside the ark (Gen. 7:16). It is not hard to picture the flood waters rising and those left outside of the ark trying to pry the door open, and screaming “let me in, let me in,” but to no avail. On the Day of Judgment, the door to heaven will be sealed shut to those outside of the body of Christ.

Live faithfully for God while there is still opportunity. Do not be left out!

— Andy Gates

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*Seek The Old Paths* is a monthly publication of the **Leoni Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is FREE, being supported by the contributions of both individuals and congregations. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless it is marked “not for publication.” The church building is located at: 2132 Old McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

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